

Message Text

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21

ACTION ORM-02

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 IO-13 ISO-00 DHA-02 SCA-01 VO-03 INSE-00

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R 130922Z OCT 76

FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6344

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

USMISSION GENEVA

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SINGAPORE 4699

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SREF

SUBJ: INDOCHINESE REFUGEES - BOAT CASE VUNG TAU

REFS: A. STATE 251087; B. GENEVA 7950

1. I APPROACHED MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS CHUA SIAN CHIN
OCTOBER 13 ON SUBJECT OF VUNG TAU REFUGEES, AND AS PER REFTEL
A URGED THAT REFUGEES NOT BE EXPELLED PENDING COMPLETION OF
OUR PROCESSING OF THEIR APPLICATIONS. CHUA REITERATED GOS POLICY
OF NOT BEING "STUCK" WITH REFUGEES -- A POLICY WHICH HE DESCRIBED
AS BEING FIRM -- BUT SAID THAT HE HAD IT WITHIN HIS DISCRETION
TO ALLOW THEM TO REMAIN IN SINGAPORE FOR ONE OR TWO WEEKS WHILE
REPAIRS ON THEIR BOAT WERE BEING COMPLETED. HE EXPRESSED
HOPE THAT PROCESSING COULD BE COMPLETED WITHIN THIS TIME.

2. I STRESSED DESIRABILITY OF CHUA'S EXERCISING MAXIMUM
DISCRETIONARY POWER ON RETENTION OF REFUGEES, AND EXPRESSED
CONFIDENCE THAT ANY EXTRA EXPENSES COULD BE MET THROUGH UNHCR
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CHANNELS. CHUA IN REPLY REFERRED TO LACK OF FACILITIES FOR

HANDLING REFUGEES SINCE CLOSING DOWN OF ST. JOHN'S ISLAND, AND WOULD NOT COMMIT HIMSELF TO EXTENDING REFUGEES' STAY BEYOND TWO WEEKS ("TWO WEEKS - LAH").

3. FROM MY CONVERSATION WITH CHUA IT APPEARS DOUBTFUL THAT SINGAPORE AUTHORITIES ARE AS FLEXIBLE REGARDING VUNG TAU REFUGEES AS SAMPATKUMAR SAYS THEY ARE (REFTEL B). HE HAS ERRED IN THIS RESPECT BEFORE, AND AS OF OCTOBER 12 OUR ONLY INFORMATION FROM HIM ABOUT STAY OF VUNG TAU REFUGEES WAS THAT GOS HAD AGREED TO GIVE UNHCR REPRESENTATIVE HERE CONTINUED ACCESS TO THEM (SAMPATKUMAR HAD ALSO HEARD THAT BOAT REPAIRS COULD BE COMPLETED AS SHORTLY AS THREE OR FOUR DAYS).

4. AS MATTER OF RECORD, WHEN EMBASSY'S CONSULAR OFFICER TRIED ON OCTOBER 12 TO REACH GOS IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENT AND MARINE POLICE ON WELFARE/WHEREABOUTS OF VUNG TAU REFUGEES, HE WAS TURNED AWAY WITH STATEMENT THAT CASE WAS BEING HANDLED ENTIRELY THROUGH UNHCR, AND THAT WE SHOULD ADDRESS ALL QUESTIONS TO THEM. HOWEVER, WHEN CONSULAR OFFICER TELEPHONED KWOK, THE LOCAL UNHCR REPRESENTATIVE FOR SINGAPORE, KWOK KNEW NOTHING ABOUT THE CASE AND FAILED IN HIS EFFORTS TO OBTAIN MORE INFORMATION FROM GOS ON THE REFUGEES OR GAIN ACCESS TO THEM. SAMPATKUMAR LATER INFORMED US ON HIS OWN INITIATIVE RE CONTINUED UNHCR ACCESS.

5. I BELIEVE IT IS IMPORTANT IN THIS PARTICULAR INSTANCE FOR US TO DO ALL WE CAN TO COMPLETE PROCESSING OF VUNG TAU REFUGEES WITHIN TWO WEEKS.

6. UNHCR REPRESENTATIVE HAS BEEN INFORMED ABOUT MY CONVERSATION WITH CHUA. HOLDRIDGE

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